

Colorado

Changing the Worksite Environment

Public Health Problem

In Colorado, the obesity rate among adults increased by 141 percent from 1990 to 2002. Today, nearly half of the state's adults are overweight or obese. Efforts to address this issue by promoting healthy eating and physical activity should focus on the environments where people spend a significant amount of their time, such as their places of employment. However, businesses and other organizations have generally lacked both resources and motivation to implement wellness projects themselves.

Taking Action

Colorado's Worksite Resource Kit provides employers with resources to implement worksite wellness initiatives, regardless of the size of the worksite. In developing this kit, the Colorado Physical Activity and Nutrition (COPAN) Program relied on survey data collected from 716 organizations around the state on physical activity, nutrition, and wellness programs available to employees. Divided into four sections - health education, physical activity, healthful eating, and worksite environment - the kit outlines for employers how to plan, assess, and successfully implement physical activity and nutrition interventions, including information on the importance of each step and the availability of additional information resources.

The Worksite Resource Kit Program was launched at the Colorado Worksite Wellness Summit in November 2003. Attendees representing 63 organizations from across the state received a kit and instructions on its use. A number of additional organizations have since received kits. In addition, mini-grant recipients are now implementing programs that include informational health meetings, preventive wellness screenings, healthy cooking demonstrations, and physical activity events. Other recipients have made stairway improvements to encourage walking and now provide private rooms for nursing mothers.

Implications and Impact

Successful nutrition and physical activity outcomes from this program, such as a high level of employee interest and/or satisfaction regarding worksite activities, could result in employees making positive changes in their lives and in those of their families. For their part, employers should increasingly see the kit and other workplace interventions as a way to address the economic cost of overweight and obesity - decreased productivity, increased absenteeism, lower morale, and higher health insurance claims.

Contact Information

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